The Commonweal

WEEK BY WEEK

Checking Subversives

THE argument used to be on the theoretical plane. It went something like this: How far can our democracy go in limiting the civil liberties of adherents of Right and Left forms of totalitarianism who are bent on depriving all of us of these very civil liberties? It was a nice problem, calling for precision—one with which to while away an evening.

Now we are actually at grips with one of those totalitarianisms. Restriction of Communist activities in this country is a matter of key importance. And with American casualties in Korea running into the thousands, plus anxiety at every hand as to where, when, and in what force Russia plans next to strike, the time for niceties seems past.

In any case the Wood Bill, which passed the House by 354 to 20 (likewise the Mundt-Ferguson and McCarran Bills, which are pending in the Senate), goes further than the Congress has ever gone before. It would bar men who are designated to be members of Communist organiations from jobs in defense plants, from holding government office, from applying for passports, or from using passports already in their possession. An official government control board would decide which organizations are Communist.

That Russian agents should not hold critical jobs or draw down pay from the US government or travel about from country to country with American passports is reasonable and incontrovertible. And to have that on the statute books has a certain value; in some cases enactment of such provisions might supply the bases for actual prosecutions.

Unhappily, the Russian agents we would most want to constrain would be too slick for the cumbersome registration apparatus set up by the Wood Bill. The Communist Party itself is already busy drawing up new membership lists to enable key operators to escape the damaging Red label. Enactment of a law does not ensure the realization of its provisions.

Just now it is espionage and sabotage that we have most to fear, as President Truman himself maintains. Armed forces' intelligence and the FBI, as it is, have adequate legislation on which to base their activities in defense of the national security. Enemy agents are already *per se* disbarred from critical posts.

On the grounds of national defense it would seem that the Party and its subsidiary and front organizations should be allowed to continue their propaganda operations legally unhampered. For they supply leads as to the identities of the real Communists.

Besides, it is not the fulminations of the *Daily Worker* that make an impress on the American public; it is rather the fellow-travelers who continue to write and review and publish in major publications—quite unsuspected by the reading public. Despite such a law these effective molders of opinion, outside the pale of Party membership, could continue their work of confusing the issues as before. But there is little to fear here at home from the siren call of the general Communist propaganda line, despite the still-existing injustices that propaganda feeds on.

FOR security reasons, then, it would seem better not to attempt new laws for Communist organizations. A lot of them would tend to become inactive if, as the House bill provides, all their "literature" has to be labeled as Communist before being sent through the mails. Better to allow some scattered popular confusion than to crack down and destroy the leads for the FBI which subversive organizations and their publications bring.

And in the background there is the extreme caution which this nation must exercise before tampering with civil liberties. For they are precious in themselves. They are at the base of the American democratic tradition. They constitute the basis for the strong appeal which the American way of life could have for the peoples of the outside world.

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• THIS WEEK •

Week by Week 547

Babbitt Revisited
by Peter Viereck 551

No More Crusades
by Donald Attwater 554

Bankrupt's Oath
by Francis Downing 555

Of Note 557

The Screen
by Philip T. Hartung 558

How Green This Valley
by James O'Gara 560

Books 562

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• NEXT WEEK •

SERGE HUGHES reviews the new Hemingway novel, *Across the River and into the Trees*. Treating the symbolism of Hemingway's latest heroine, he writes:

"The Colonel's disillusion left him with but one value. He has no political convictions for he knows politicians. No respect for culture for he has seen it the maidservant of the strong and arrogant. No sense of patriotism for he knows that too can be a racket. . . . But if one meets a healthy, uncomplex, wholesome girl, then life acquires meaning."

School Bells

MORE from the bumper crop of wartime babies are toddling off to overcrowded classrooms this September. There are a million more youngsters in the grades than ever before in the history of the country. In many places, half-day classes have been inaugurated to take care of the overflow, with less deleterious effects on the children's learning than was previously thought but with greater strain on teachers. (It has long been at least a moot question as to whether the grade-school eight-year course is not unnecessarily prolonged.)

The teacher-shortage is still with us. Last June the colleges graduated only about a third of the number necessary to keep the primary schools adequately staffed. The usual reasons, low pay and the enticing rewards of other professions, are again offered in explanation. And to harass school boards further, the cost of public primary education is leaping. The average in some places ($190) for keeping a child in school is almost twice what it was before the big war.

At the high-school level, things are not as bad as they are going to be. The years 1953 and '54 will see the real bulging of high-school walls. High-school teachers are not as hard to find as their grade-school counterparts, though there is a definite shortage of domestic-science teachers. Too many of those trained for the job are practicing full-time in their own homes.

In the universities, the big challenge, which came with the onrush of veterans after the war, is a thing of the past. University enrollment this September far outnumbers the record for pre-war years. But with the gradual disappearance of veterans from the campus, there is relief in sight, or at least time for thoughtful planning before the multitudinous class of 1961 starts stretching some more walls. It is still hard for the universities to nab qualified Ph.D.'s for their faculties, though they are no longer a rarity in the better-paying industries. It seems that the schools have proved too well that it pays to be educated. They cannot convince their own graduates to settle for the prestige and peanuts of academic life.

At all levels, American education faces a crisis, if not pedagogic at least physical. Year after year the shortages of room and teachers grow more acute and the sheer numbers of students wax more awesome. (There will be a brief respite soon, accounted for by the shortage of births when most of the armed forces were overseas.)

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So this same sort of comment can be written every September for some years to come.

And at this point in the discussion, it is usual to quote the depressing statistics on how much more is spent on liquor, cigarettes or movies than on education, the country over. Then we realize that however far we go to solve the manifold problems of popular education, we must still admit that we have a long way left before we can be satisfied with ourselves and decide that we are already doing all that can be expected.

Disenchantment

WE THINK we sense a new trend blowing in from the left. A few weeks ago a Mrs. Dorothy Ferman wrote an article in *The Nation* called "The Psychoanalytical Joy Ride." Mrs. Ferman and her husband were recently divorced upon the suggestion of Mr. Ferman's psychiatrist. When the couple first met six years ago, Jim Ferman "had been seeing his analyst five times a week for eighteen months, which was then considered about the average course of treatment for persons with ordinary problems."

With the approval of his current psychiatrist, Mr. Ferman eventually popped the question. Mrs. Ferman, who learned later that she was therapy suggested by the doctor (and found effective) joyfully accepted. She planned then, more or less subconsciously, "to supplant the services of the analyst in a woman's way." But with little success. In their lives, she says now, there was no mother-in-law, no other man or woman. But there was always a psychiatrist.

Mrs. Ferman blames the psychiatrists, above all, for spoiling what she thinks might have been a happy marriage. ". . . the position of power accorded the psychiatrist by the mores of our time seems dangerous to me and is frightening."

Could it be that Mrs. Ferman is the first of a long line of ex-Freudians to take the stand? Perhaps the time has come when brave men must face up to the confession literature of the future: "I got out of college in the early forties. We were a confused generation. The literature of social protest had already grown stale. The May Day parades were growing visibly thinner. All the good jobs in Washington had been taken. Where were we to turn? Then one night I saw a musical. It was called *Lady in the Dark*. It had a psychiatric message. Naturally I was interested. I was bothered and bewildered when I walked into the theater. When I walked out I was bewitched, too. I thought I had found a way out. So it was that one day I took the long, long step. I walked into a Park Avenue office and gave my name to the receptionist. It was almost a decade before I came out of the shadows and into the sun again. . . ."

Whether we are in for a new literature of disillusion or not, Mrs. Ferman's short article was enough to draw vigorous answers from two prominent psychiatrists, both of which appeared in the two-sides-to-every-story (sometimes) *Nation*. Could be that another fashionable cult is about to collapse.

The Spiral

AT THE outbreak of the Korean war commodity prices had already started a new upward surge. The controls which Mr. Baruch so cogently urged in Congress were, first, to assure adequate supplies for the war effort and, second, to prevent the damage to the national economy which would be wrought by runaway inflation. Congress was greatly impressed at the time, but in the interval it has sunk back toward its original timid sentiments. There is assurance as to the first of these objects; why worry too much about inflation? There is plenty of everything to be had, therefore no danger that things will get out of hand.

Meanwhile a new wage-price spiral is gaining momentum. Prices are edging up to their very highest point of two years ago. Auto makers are among the many to agree with the CIO to wage raises.

The American Federation of Labor has issued a significant instruction to its membership. It says that workers will require "substantial" wage increases in coming months. It urges cooperation to prevent price rises that would lead to "wage controls which will shackle collective bargaining." The guiding principle is to ask for raises that will not cause further price rises—by studying company financial reports to determine ability to pay. As the profit statements of American corporations continue extremely good, the results of such scrutiny are not hard to predict.

With the CIO and AFL pressing for wage increases in every sector of American industry, a general price rise, due to increased costs, should shortly follow. This will ensue even if consumers' goods continue in good supply. Then Labor, finding itself soon deprived of the fruits of its

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monetary gains, will demand another round of increases. And if the war itself should spread and cut deep into the supply of civilian goods, the inflationary effect would be that more drastic.

At the time of the original Baruch testimony legislators were surprised at the extent of support expressed for the views of the elder statesman by their constituents. Presumably willingness to submit to controls for the sake of the common effort would be even stronger today, after two and one-half months of war. Why do the President and Congress refuse to grasp the reins?

Global Nuisance

ALTHOUGH the UN, like the League of Nations before it, has not been able to wield a big enough stick to preserve law and order in the world, the Russians have found it impossible, on occasion, to treat either organization as if it were only a weak sister. After first refusing to join the League, the Soviets changed their minds in 1934, deciding, as the saying goes, that if you can't beat 'em, join 'em. Their purpose then was to prevent the formation of a hostile non-Soviet power bloc, signs of which were very much in the wind.

Where the UN is concerned, the Soviets have been reluctant to make a clean break for the same reason. Displaying an extensive repertoire of obstructionist tactics (the veto, boycott and filibuster), they have not been able to do what their behavior indicates they would like to do, which is, either to dominate the UN or destroy it. For shake it off, they cannot. Mr. Malik learned that, when, after vowing never to return as long as the Chinese Nationalists were around, he returned, despite the vows, when a really effective moral and military non-Soviet power bloc took shape overnight after the Korean Communists came across the 38th parallel.

So although the Soviets know they will have to stay close by hereafter, it is unlikely that they can subvert the UN to the extent of dominating it. The organization, as it stands, is too closely modelled on Western parliamentary procedure to allow that.

Unable, then, either to dominate the UN or to walk out of it for good, the Russians can be expected, in the Assembly meeting beginning this month, to do their best to befog the chamber so densely that nothing of consequence can go on there. This, of course, will be nothing new, but from the Soviet point of view a lot hangs on the outcome of their forensics. Like a nuisance under their feet, the UN has to be kicked aside, but before that is done, the organization will have to be made ridiculous in the eyes of the world; it will have to be subjected to a steady cross-fire of abuse first.

How well the non-Soviet delegates handle themselves in this circumstance may well determine not just the future of the UN as we know it, but of world peace itself. For to the surprise of nearly everyone, Soviet and non-Soviet alike, peace is hanging today largely on the moral and physical influence of this seemingly frail body the Russians can't get rid of.

There Is Some Limit

TIME studies, made by people who have devoted their life work to such things, have tended, in the past anyway, to show that overly long working hours in themselves need not reduce the peak efficiency of the worker. One proof of this comes from the Cuban cigar makers, who have long eased the monotony endured by their hired hands by providing steady musical accompaniment in the background. Further evidence is supplied by the large American life insurance companies, whose clerks number so many thousands that a single quarter-hour of drowsiness would have a devastating effect on business; so they allow short mid-morning and mid-afternoon breathers, together with a moderate-length working day, and this combination has been found to increase output considerably.

Now the National Industrial Conference Board has made some findings of its own on this matter. It has just issued certain data gathered during and after the last two wars. It finds that, although the British have a six-day, 48-hour week as a peacetime standard while the Americans have a five-day, 40-hour week, in both cases, during the war, results were poor when workers went on a seven-day week.

So, it is reassuring to realize that men with authority and know-how are becoming convinced of the limitations of the human frame, even when it is coddled with music and doughnuts. When the next pinch comes, British workers will merely have to continue the pace already made necessary in their present struggle for existence. It is the American worker who, for the duration, will have to forego some of the leisure and comforts that our more fortunate circumstances have normally allowed.

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Babbitt Revisited

The cliché mongers have found a new set of clichés

By PETER VIERECK

EVER since Matthew Arnold borrowed from Heinrich Heine the word "philistine" to describe an insensitive cliché-addicted conformism, the word has had certain indefinable but readily recognizable connotations for the English-speaking world, immortalized in its American application by Sinclair Lewis's book *Babbitt*.

When I returned to Harvard to teach after World War II, I noticed—simply by keeping my eyes and ears open—that philistinism had acquired a new content, a new set of conditioned reflexes. It was still mongering clichés, but the clichés had changed. My first clue to the change was my discovery of the reversed attitudes toward Memorial Hall, in contrast with the conditioned reflexes that this old Harvard landmark had evoked back in my student days of the '30s. Those who ought to have liked Memorial Hall, the Babbitts, the thick-skinned souls—were mocking it. Those who in the old days would have mocked it—the boys always one jump ahead of the game—were now pretending very hard to like it, to make a cult of it, to find it quaint. And the only people still using the old-fashioned epithets "philistine" or "Babbitt" were the Babbitts themselves. The main activity of the new-style philistine has become the facile game of philistine-baiting.

I should like to suggest that the autumn of any civilization, the twilight of the gods, begins on that hour when the suburb becomes sophisticated. Definition of a suburb: any congregation of those would-be city slickers who are deadly afraid of seeming suburban. For a bill of particulars I submit a few short excerpts from a novel I am writing on Babbitt's imaginary son: not "George Babbitt" but bearing the fancier name, that I invented for him, of "Gaylord Babbitt." Perhaps every twenty years, the eternal Babbitt dons a new name and a new mask. Whereas Sinclair Lewis's George Babbitt talks about boosting and flag-waving and hating slackers and reds, and hating such long-hair stuff as culture, my Gaylord Babbitt says: "I go for art and culture in a big way. If there's one thing I can't stand, it's a Babbitt. Say, there's nothing more wonderful than defying middle-class conventions. There's no more fearless defier than I; why, I defy conventions right and left."

At this point the wife of Babbitt Junior chimes in: "I can't stand those barbaric middle-class businessmen. In my little salon, everybody's gotta be suave and *civilisé*."

Where Babbitt Senior would have used a lithograph of Whistler's "Mother" to cover up that hole in the wallpaper, Babbitt Junior would, of course, use a Picasso. The essence of all Babbittry, senior or junior, is stereotypes. The stereotypes of Babbitt Senior are the following words and connotations: solid, reliable, sound, business-like, wholesome. The stereotyped words and connotations of Babbitt Junior are: daring, vital, dynamic, unpuritanical, forward-looking, the masses, the common man.

★

RECENTLY I had a luncheon engagement in New York with a friend in business, a friend since high school, where he had been voted "Class Babbitt." Most conventional fellow I know. Being in a hurry, I suggested we have hamburgers at the drugstore counter.

"No," said my friend in business. "You must let me take you to an adequate little French restaurant in the East Fifties. Sure, it takes two hours to get served there, but that's what I call Art of Living. Guess I'm just an ole Bohemian at heart."

The phrase "East Fifties" has always haunted me as a leitmotif of the new Babbitt. During a recent midwestern lecture tour on poetry, I was invited to a Rotary Club lunch. I was delighted, hoping to pick up useful hints on the stock market and on whether hog prices are going up. Instead, to my disappointment, everybody talked in a knowing way—"knowing" is the word—about favorite French restaurants in the East Fifties, and where to get the best *pâté de foie gras*.

As I left, a very sensitive young garter salesman from Des Moines was saying dreamily:

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"Gee, it must be wonnerful to be out there on the Left Bank and sit there in some café with Sartre, talking all about existentialism and everything. And maybe at the table right next to me, sipping absinthe, there'd be Alice B. Toklas and Josephine Baker and Louis Aragon and Garry Davis, all out on a double-date together."

From that moment on, I became haunted by the ubiquity of Babbitt Junior. In every city, at every party, I ran into him under some new disguise. If you're not fooled by his un-Babbittlike masks, you'll be able to spot him, too. His face, his name, may seem to change. But you can't miss him. You can always spot him by the phrases he uses, by his enlightened, forward-looking attitude toward everything, in life or art or politics; and even more, by his awareness of how enlightened and forward-looking he is and by the satisfaction that such awareness gives him. This is the same satisfaction that poor, stodgy, conservative old Babbitt Senior used to feel when he strolled through Zenith long ago in that other epoch. I mean before 1929, before the world changed on him and laughed at his ideas.

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IN CONTRAST, nobody laughs at Babbitt Junior's ideas. That's because they're always so liberal and *avant-garde*. "How," I sometimes ask my hero in open-mouthed admiration, "do you manage to insure so infallibly that your ideas on any subject are always the most liberal possible, so that you're always protected, never giving anybody an opening to kid you as philistine or old fogey or awful narrow-minded businessman?"

Pouring himself an elegant demi-tasse of Sparkling Burgundy, his favorite distinguished beverage, Gaylord Babbitt replies to me frankly: "That's easy as pie. For example, take politics. Whenever I have to choose between two political ideas, I always choose whichever idea is the more Advanced. If they're equally Advanced, so that I can't choose, then I read what my *Nation* and my *New Republic* say about it. And as for the field of art and sex—you know, art, sex, that kind of thing—why, sometimes my thoughts are so Advanced that I tremble at my own daring."

If Memorial Hall is one important clue to Babbittry's new party-line, another key is the changed role of *The New Yorker*. It no longer provides élite titillations for a small circle of smoothies. It now means big business, big advertising, big circulation. It has become the favorite magazine of Gaylord Babbitt, just as George Babbitt's favorite magazine was the Chamber of Commerce bulletin. Mrs. Gaylord Babbitt will now tell you, "I met the quaintest taxicab driver the other day; he was priceless: he said the most whimsical things." Thus *The New Yorker* line has been adopted by the very people whom *The New Yorker* was originally created to satirize. It has not changed its humor or appeal, but society has changed; the philistine has changed his mask.

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LET us examine, respectively, the political application and the literary application of the new Babbittry.

First, politics. To best indicate my point, I quote from a recent article by Robert Bendiner, associate editor of *The Nation* and a leading liberal: "Out of some 140,000,000 people in the United States, at least 139,500,000 are liberals, to hear them tell it, 'liberal' having become a rough synonym for virtuous, decent, humane, and kind to animals. Rare is the citizen who can bring himself to say, 'Sure I'm a conservative. What of it?' And any American would sooner drop dead than proclaim himself a reactionary."

Even Senator Taft calls himself a liberal. Babbitt Senior was a Republican. Babbitt Junior knows that it's smart to be left. "If there's one thing I go for in a big way, it's Progress. If you ask me, people who talk law and order are just a bunch of duds and has-beens. Political democracy is okay in its way. But there's something else you conservatives forget. A different kind of democracy. And do you know what *that is*? It's economic democracy! *Economic* democracy, that's what's gonna hit the sociological jackpot of the future. As my favorite sophisticated poetess, Dorothy Parker, so aptly put it, 'It's no longer I but We!'"

Similarly, Gaylord Babbitt has proclaimed a "sophisticated" new line for literature. Reviewing an unsatisfactory book of poetry (possibly a book of mine), one of the fashionable arty Little Magazines concluded something like this: "We unfortunately miss in this book that rich surrealistic obscurity which our modern taste has been led to expect." The give-away phrase here is "led to expect." The justification of the modernist revolt against Victorian clichés was to give the public what it did *not* expect; hence, quite properly shocking the public of Babbitt Senior by surrealism, Joycean cross-references, and obscurity in poetry, an obscurity which Babbitt *père* smugly denounces as "long-haired," and which Babbitt *fils* with equal smugness applauds as à-la-mode. In the long run, Babbitt Junior is even more dangerous to art than Babbitt Senior. Old George Babbitt merely hates art. Gaylord Babbitt hugs it to death.

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THE clichés of conservatism have been ousted in both politics and poetry, and this is a good thing; let's get rid of conservative

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clichés. But instead they have been replaced by the clichés of radicalism and revolution. The latter clichés are just as stereotyped but less rank. Those of us who belong to what Robert Bendiner calls the "conservative" minority, thereby at least *admit* we believe in tradition. But leftism and the cult of revolt claims for itself the virtue of freshness and independence; instead, it has its own jargon and old-fogey dogmatisms without ever admitting it.

The resulting situation is not funny. It is a serious, perhaps tragic, problem. Society is in a bad way when people say two and two are five because it sounds more daring than to say two and two are four. Society is in a bad way when too many people reject every ancient truth and tradition in ethics and politics and art because thereby they can show off better at cocktail parties. Civilization is an infinitely fragile bundle of accumulated habits and restraints. The necessary conservative function of any generation is not just to enjoy itself but to pass on this bundle in good condition to the next generation. Only the conservation of this moral heritage of the West can halt Stalinist fascism and can prevent the revival of that Hitlerite fascism against which our generation fought World War II.

The core and fire-center of this moral conservation, this conservative way to freedom, is a humanist respect for the dignity of the individual. This is incompatible with fascist or Stalinist collectivism; incompatible with a purely mechanistic view of man; incompatible with a purely economic view of history.

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DOES the humanist stress on the perfection of great creative individuals sound too aristocratic for an ant-heap age? Perhaps that is just how it ought to sound. We don't need a "century of the common man"; we have it already, and it has only produced the commonest man, the impersonal and irresponsible and uprooted mass-man. What we need, and what a humanistic, non-utilitarian education will foster, is a century of the individual man. Such a century would no longer change persons into masses but masses into persons, each with individuality and sense of personal responsibility, each with a sense of his ethical duties to balance his material rights. The century of the common man means a century of sterile and tyrannic philistinism, whether it be a philistinism of right or of left, of Colonel Blimp or of Comrade Blimp. A century that returns to the humanist ideal of the individual man must hold equally aloof from George Babbitt and Gaylord Babbitt.

Radicalism and revolt are just as valuable as conservatism so long as they really do correct social defects.

In the Victorian age, civilization was stuffy and stodgy; conservatism at its worst. It was dull to have only law and tradition; it was healthy and useful for obscure and surrealist poems and paintings to stir up placid reality with a nightmare art. It was healthy and useful to have the young rebel poke dull old civilization in its stuffed shirt; the *enfant terrible* served a real purpose.

Today the whole world is *terrible*. The whole world has become a surrealist painting. What was shocking in early surrealist painting was: legs and arms strewn about, buildings torn open. This contrasted with an unstrewn and untorn Victorian and Coolidgean reality. Today, however, reality is strewn all over the place. To us GI soldiers in Italy, strewn limbs and buildings became the norm. If the Babbitt is he who kowtows to fashionable conventions, then it is the wilfully obscure poet and the surrealist artist and the *enfant terrible* Greenwich Village genius who is the philistine; *he* is accentuating society's defects. The traditional moralist, the conservative in politics and in poetry, is correcting the defects. When reality is itself a nightmare, then an art which is lucid and calm and ennobling — an eighteenth-century neoclassical art—is more helpful, more original, and more exciting.

★

FOR a generation brought up not under Queen Victoria but under Queen Betty Boop, with not President Eliot but Dr. Kinsey as Father Confessor, for such a generation Flaming Youth is not exciting but a bore. The only way to shock your reader in a modern non-Victorian novel—if that's what you want to do—would be to use the word "limbs" instead of "legs." That would shock them more than all the boring four-letter words of Norman Mailer and D. H. Lawrence.

Just as the clichés of old-style philistinism justly provoked the earlier revolt, so the clichés of revolt — what I call "Gaylord Babbitt" — will inevitably provoke a revolt against revolt.

But an affectation of archepiscopal reactionary stodginess would be just as tiresome as the present rebel stodginess. In both art and politics, one pendulum extreme is as bad as the other. Why have any affectations, either reactionary or revolutionary? Why not be yourself? Integrity may be the dullest platitude in the preaching of old Polonius, but integrity is the two-plus-two that does make four. A reverence for integrity, not because it's fashionable but because it's true, such a reverence would work a moral revolution deeper and more helpful than all the shallow artistic and political and economic revolts of our panting apostles of progress. It would be a moral revolution against that inner smirk which prefers cleverness to wisdom.

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FROM ENGLAND

No More Crusades

SEVERAL PEOPLE who are kind enough to read this column have inquired why I do not write about political things, at least one of them hinting that I am fiddling while Rome burns. I'm sorry; but every man to his job. As Eric Gill used to say of himself, "politics is one of the things I can't do."

And anyhow, when it is a question of some matter about which I happen to think, or feel, strongly, I am only one among some fifty million souls and so can do nothing about it anyway. (Oh yes; I know that sentiment is sheer defeatism and a betrayal of democracy. And I know the answer. Between 1942 and 1945 I often expended a lot of energy combating that very sentiment—"I'm only one, I can do nothing about it" —among Britishers in uniform. And not indeed with my tongue in my cheek: but with little enthusiasm or hope in my heart.)

Moreover, taken in the lump, we English are not a politically-minded people. I think it is certainly true that by force of circumstances we have become much more "politicized" since the first world war, but we still take other things considerably more seriously. Once, talking with a distinguished Russian long resident in England, I criticized unfavorably our mass enthusiasm for, and interest in, sports of all kinds. He rebuked me. "It is one of your most valuable characteristics. It contributes to some of the best qualities of English people. And how much better than a mass enthusiasm for politics! The English people get what they want; but they are content to get it slowly, peaceably, without bloodshed and violent revolution. The knowledge that life is more than politics has given a peculiar ripeness to your civilization." Well, that is not the whole story — but there's a lot in it. And we are still like that. Take this Korean business, for instance.

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I HAVE recently been on a teaching assignment that for three months kept me in the daily company of several Catholic priests and a couple of young laymen. The Korean news broke. Its significance was fully appreciated; but it aroused no excitement. We continued to look through the London *Times* daily, and our radio continued unused (except occasionally for cricket scores).

Things rapidly looked worse and worse. One of the laymen said to his fellow, "Looks as if we'll soon be in the army again." The other, not long married and soon to be a father, may well have had bitter thoughts; but he simply grunted. That was all the (audible) comment from them.

As for the clergy, I do not recollect hearing them refer to the matter. They were busy and devoted men, engrossed in the responsible job of educating and caring for four-score boys. They could neither help nor hinder the world situation by speculating about it. If the world blew up, then by that much would their task become more responsible and difficult and engrossing.

The semester over, I visited London and several other places. The atmosphere of the capital was considerably more cheerful and encouraging than when I was last there, two years ago: the possibly impending doom cast no shadow that I could see; and if it be true that many Americans had left for home in a hurry there were indubitably large numbers who had not. August is the most popular vacation month in England. The railroad terminals for the seaside towns were crowded with holiday-makers, and the barriers for the continental-boat trains were more jam-packed than any others. My own concern for a daughter adventuring into Normandy with a bicycle seemed rather silly.

Then Canterbury in cricket-week, a century-old festival, as English as anything could be: the city's ancient narrow streets beflagged, and in the middle of its large bomb-devastated area an open-air café set out amidst the rubble and wild flowers. From thence to a watering-place on the Kentish coast, its beaches and amusement places crammed; and then to a Hampshire country town where the talk was of business and local affairs and plans for next year's musical festival.

★

NOW I think I am tolerably sensitive to atmosphere; but in none of these places, and others, did I get any impression of a widespread underlying uneasiness, or of any spirit of "let's eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die." And this serenity is certainly not due to ignorance. From the moment the North Koreans moved (or better, were "impelled by a kick from behind," to borrow an appropriate figure from Stephen Leacock) our public men and our newspapers have been quite frank about the situation and its frightful dangers. (And the more popular papers at the drop of the hat pulled out with complete irresponsibility and insensitiveness their old romantic stop in war-reporting. Any one would think you Americans were putting on a Western film in Korea. It is nauseating.)

I think the most widespread reason for the apparent indifference, is the reflexion that "we—that is Tom, Dick and Harriet—can't do anything about it. If it comes, it comes." That can be stigmatized as an unholy fatalism; but it is also true where Tom, Dick and Harriet are concerned—except in so far as a conscious and determined set of the mind and spirit against war among masses of people could have in some "supernatural" way a deterrent effect. About that I know nothing, nor I believe, dear reader, do you. But there may be something in it.

Among older people there is a real psychological fatigue, if that is not too grandiloquent a name for the state indicated by the words, "I've seen two world wars, and I've just given up worrying about what may happen next," sometimes accompanied by a remark suggest-

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ing an unnatural indifference to death. Neither among older nor younger have I met any tendency to welcome, or at least to approve, a "war to end Communism"; those *enragés* who might take that line have been sobered by the shock of events, and irresponsibility is at a discount.

The overwhelming mass of people in this country know little or nothing about the theory of Communism, but they've heard a lot about its practice: and they don't like it. They realize that it is now a real threat to themselves. If the war should come they will see it, not as a "crusade" against some monstrous evil or a defense of some such abstraction as "Western civilization" or "Christendom" or some "way of life," but as a plain matter of practical self-defense. And even if successful, they have no illusions about the results. In 1914 they were sent to fight to end imperial German militarism; within a generation their sons were sent to end Nazism and Fascism; 1914-18 led straight to 1939-45. And 1939-45 leads to a war to end Communism? And then what? No: "crusades" are definitely "out."

★

IN MY wanderings last month I talked with many people, of all sorts and conditions, but with one exception met no sustained discussion of "the crisis." The exception is worth mentioning. It was with several middle-aged people, consciously Christian and quietly cheerful. They took the line that our situation is, even more than it seems, like that in which St. Augustine sat down to write the *City of God*. The Roman empire was crumbling because the seeds of dissolution within it had come to fruition: our Western civilization also would seem to be ripe for dissolution, and so the Communists have their chance, just as in the fifth century the barbarians from beyond the Rhine and the Danube had theirs.

As the main symptom of our degeneration they put forward a practical and stupid materialism which, they said, differs from that of Communists only in that it is not theoretical as well: a materialism of practical guys, industrialists, merchants, "good husbands and loving fathers," that even in the physical order does not put first things first. Their examples of it varied picturesquely from the advertisements in American glossy magazines to the English administration that tears up the top surface of good farm-land to get a few more tons of coal and iron-ore, from the artificial insemination of animals (to say nothing of human beings) to the idea that the more expensive a church, the more honor to God. We have heard all this before, and its over-simplification is obvious enough. But perhaps we ought to have paid more attention.

I have emphasized that the British are, so far as I can see, taking it quietly. But do not misunderstand this. I have heard no talk of neutrality. If there is a third war they will go into it with determination: but with even less enthusiasm than in 1939. And it is then perhaps that they are at their most dangerous.

DONALD ATTWATER.

THE LABOR MOVEMENT

Bankrupt's Oath

WHAT Lee Pressman did, in August 1950, was to insure himself a place in American history. For at that time he began the slow, reluctant process of branding himself for all the time that men would care to write history about. To a suspicion of him that is almost twenty years old, Pressman had added certainty; in the last ten years men have, in one place or another, named him as a Communist. Now he has accused himself, hedging his accusation about with reservation and lame excuse—as would any tricky lawyer; and his denunciation and the manner of it place him among the odd, the unsatisfying and the incomplete.

Neither his motivation in becoming a Communist, nor his motive in this public disembarrassment, are made understandable or clear. He seems in neither case to have acted out of any conviction as would one converted. He made no gamble for great stakes, sure, if winning, of prestige and place, as did Benedict Arnold; no great, brilliant, reckless act as did Aaron Burr. It is not yet clear that he engaged in espionage like Alger Hiss, while remaining quiet, proud, disdainful, contained, denying, mysterious, silent.

No greatness of mind characterizes him, nor no large pride. He was seized by no peremptory and encompassing emotion. About him is no nobility of mind or spirit. His break does not cleave his soul. He is moved by no passion, no deep love of his country or its institutions. From nothing that he has written or said does one get any sense of despair; they do not emerge, these words, from any Gethsemane. Just as one does not feel that he was a victim of the tragedy of history, he does not feel, either, that Pressman is, in Whittaker Chambers' words about himself, submitting himself to any "indispensable ordeal."

What one does feel is the presence and the leather odor of the bookkeeper. One feels, I am speaking of myself, that Pressman has done all the addition and subtraction in the petty ledger of his calculating life, and has ineluctably concluded that the former business would not pay; so that he takes a bankrupt's oath in order that no past claims can be laid against him, and he can set up another business in another street. Here, for all his long association with the presumed party of the revolutionary proletariat, is the petit bourgeois counting from his tight purse the coins, the pennies and the dimes, of his careful psychological and intellectual life.

The petit bourgeois is nothing if not respectable. I see Pressman again, as I remember him, in the lobbies of hotels, on the stage of many CIO conventions, sitting still and secretive and contained; reading the resolutions he had written or the Party had written for him, in a voice that was a blend of arrogant blandness. And what, through all else of suspicion and wonder, remains un-

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tarnished over all the years is the image of a man carefully, conventionally, expensively, beautifully dressed. If "blue-suit socialism" was not invented by Lee Pressman, he was, at least, its archetype, its debonnair practicer and defender.

He looked like any *Daily Worker's* conventional and stereotyped conception of a banker or a banker's son. He wore the badges of respectability as lightly and with as much quiet pride, as anyone whoever came out of Bond Street or of Brooks Brothers. The careless disregard for clothes that marks the very sure and the rich, the "proper Bostonian," say, was never his. One could well imagine his refraining from the barricades because he was not dressed for it, or because it was not the thing to do. It was not merely caution, though it was that too, but a sense that it was not respectable or fitting that kept Pressman out of May Day parades.

★

JUST as there seems to be no conviction in his going away, there seems to have been no conviction in his coming into the Communist Party. No one that I ever knew or heard accused Pressman of being without brains. Yet this is what he tells us and asks us to believe:

> In the early nineteen thirties our country was deep in a depression. The future looked black for my generation emerging from school. At the same time the growing specter of nazism in Germany presented an equally grave threat. In my desire to see the destruction of Hitlerism and an improvement in economic conditions at home I joined a Communist group in Washington, D. C., about 1934.

If my young daughter wrote sentences like those she would deserve spanking. They are childish and handle thought childishly. They proceed from no recollected anger and from no despair. They do not communicate because they do not reveal. They parrot limply like a schoolgirl reciting her prayers or her catechism to a nun, and are supported by as little firmness, as little grasp, as little understanding. Mr. Pressman is making an effort to convince, but it is labored and stilted, and is off the top of his mind. If it is the truth he tells here, he is more simple than those who feared him thought. If it is not the truth, he is but a shoddy imposter, full of conceit and of contempt for his contemporaries, thinking that on the basis of this drive they will accept him for having crossed the aisle. But it is not thus that men speak who have wrestled with the devil or with the angels. It is not thus that men speak who climb Jacob's ladder out of the burning agony of hell.

Pressman makes two statements about democracy, the one written out the day before his testimony and the other on the stand.

> Our survival must be based upon the peoples' understanding of the true meaning and worth of American democracy and their determination to fight for its preservation and full enjoyment, [and-]
>
> I intend to fight as strongly as I can from here on out for democracy.

Do you remember the statement of David Lilienthal about democracy when, on the stand he was being hectored by the blundering Hickenlooper? Mr. Lilienthal could use that kind of language because it was the product of belief. Pressman's phrases are filled with no more emotional content than is the bottom of a girl's purse, and no more conviction than the pressure of her eyelashes on her cheek.

★

PRESSMAN discovered on the 10th of August that: "The warfare raging in Korea threatens to unleash a world conflict which would destroy our civilization. All my life I have opposed aggression. I therefore denounce the fighting initiated by the North Korean forces in South Korea." "The Communist party and its forces in the labor movement are the supporters and apologists for an aggressive war. I vigorously oppose that position."

"All my life" is a long time; included in it are the aggressive moves which Soviet Russia made on Finland, on Yugoslavia, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Rumania, and Czechoslovakia. I do not know of any protest that Pressman made against any of these. Pressman was almost in complete charge of the Progressive Party convention which nominated Wallace for the Presidency. His great gift as a resolutions' writer was called on here. The whole point of the party and the Wallace campaign was to attack our foreign policy and to praise and support that of the Soviet. What is this idiocy about opposing aggression all his life?

Pressman told the Congressional Committee that this new, latest action of his is a result of his peering "into his conscience to evaluate his convictions upon which to base his faith and creed." A number of things in that statement elicit my curiosity and perplexity. Before I make further comment I want to acknowledge that it is not merely a difficult thing, it is a dangerous and audacious thing to follow another man's conscience and to make judgment on the acts which he alleges flow from it. Yet I cannot believe Mr. Pressman. If conscience is operating here it is not recognizable by me.

★

HE TRIES to make much of the shamefully true claim that he left the CIO of his own accord. No one whom I know contests it. Rather it is still a matter of wonder and embarrassment that after what was surely an act of obedience to the Communist Party apparatus (Pressman resigned to join the captive Wallace), Philip Murray retained him to represent the CIO in some special cases. But Pressman writes that: "My contribution to the cause of organized labor during that period is a matter of record." To put it kindlier than he deserves, this is like saying that Burr's services to his country, or Harry Bridges' service to labor are a matter of record. For even if you accept as fact that Pressman left the Party, as he says, in 1935, he admits that he consulted

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with its leaders all the time he was counsel to the CIO. It is a dubious record to which Pressman now lays stainless claim. He shamed a record which even now, in alleged confession, even yet he continues to distort.

He has told us the names of men who were his Communist associates, suddenly discovering in himself a sense of hurt loyalty to them. Such mention of these names he said "would be offensive to me." He protested that there was "a moral issue involved," this man who lived dimly and ambiguously, through almost seventeen years, and lived successfully and well.

He claimed, this man, that he left the Party in 1935, but admitted an ideological association until yesterday. He worked for Communist unions which the CIO had ejected, for Amtorg, the Soviet trading corporation, drafted papers for Gubitchev's lawyer, though Gubitchev, Judy Coplon's alleged lover, was a Soviet agent and a convicted spy.

Of all who have broken and who have confessed Pressman is the littlest and the least. His was one of the Party's best brains; but his present words carry the least conviction, this man without faith amid the gloom of the thirties, this intellectual gauleiter, this controlled Jacobin. For there is no penitence here, little of frankness or of truth, nothing of pity or of shame.

FRANCIS DOWNING.

Of Note

Tolerance

THE Chancery Office of the Sioux Falls, South Dakota diocese (Paulton Building, Sioux Falls, S. D.) has just published the text of an address, "Christian Unity," given by the Bishop, Most Reverend William O. Brady, to the Knights of Columbus at Aberdeen. On the general subject of tolerance, Bishop Brady said:

> The question is, "Is the Catholic Church intolerant?" Let a straightforward answer settle the matter. The answer is this: if ever in history, or if ever in the present, the priests or people of the Catholic Church have been or are guilty of bigotry, for those times and for those delinquents we are here profoundly ashamed and publicly apologetic. We beg that God will never allow repetition. For the Catholic Church officially, solemnly and publicly repudiates intolerance as it is generally understood and commonly practiced. Such intolerance includes a wish to do someone harm. Such bigotry implies rash judgment, lying calumny and even acts of violence against those with whom we disagree. Such is evil. Such the Catholic Church condemns. May God forbid that any church ever be infected with that evil for it is so base that no repudiation makes adequate reparation. . . .
>
> There is, however, another meaning to "toleration" that usually escapes the unthinking. What do we tolerate? Good things are never merely tolerated. We are always glad for good things. We want good things. We reach out to have them for ourselves. We approve them, we applaud them, we accept them. We never "tolerate" them. Men tolerate pain, if they cannot escape it. Society tolerates evil in our cities, when the evils cannot be corrected. But, while such things are "tolerated," men and society are restless; they try to relieve themselves of the evil and they are content only when relief is afforded.
>
> In this sense, the Catholic Church is truly intolerant. She hates evil, sin, social injustice. She hates error, falsehood, untruth. She hates poverty, prostitution and murder, however qualified. Of all these things, the Catholic Church is militantly intolerant. She must be intolerant as God is intolerant of whatever is evil, debased or false. And every man, whatever his religion, must be intolerant of these things, for no one may approve of evil, just as no one may accept error as the equivalent of truth. Every church, whatever its name, must be intolerant of these same things, for the church that offers to teach goodness and truth can have no tolerance for evil or error.
>
> Make no mistake about this form of "intolerance." It is nothing of which one need be ashamed. It is something of which one may rightly boast and be proud.

Is Science to Blame?

UNDER the title of *Mid-Century, the Social Implications of Scientific Progress,* the Technology Press of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology jointly with John Wiley & Sons, Inc. (440 Fourth Avenue, New York) has published a verbatim account of the discussions held at MIT on the occasion of its Mid-Century Convocation early last April. Here is an excerpt from the remarks made by Jacques Maritain.

> Science and technology provide us with means. The determination of the human ends for which these means are to be used presupposes knowledge of *what is man* and *what is the meaning of human life,* and this is not the job of science and technology, but of metaphysics, ethics and religion.
>
> Science and technology—precisely because they are not concerned with the values, ends and standards of human life as a whole, are not in a position to make the means which they provide serve good rather than evil purposes, peace rather than war, emancipation rather than enslavement of mankind. Science cannot have the cake and eat it. It enjoys a great privilege with respect to the unquestionability of its results and to its power of making agreement between minds, namely the privilege of being a merely factual knowledge. It cannot go beyond the factual.

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Science and technology, considered in their very nature, are not responsible for the moral crisis of our time, nor for the destructive or besotting and dehumanizing use we are making of the means they put in our hands, nor for the civilization, technocratic in type, which worshippers of technology wish to prepare for us.

What is responsible for the crisis is greed and will to power, and the temptation to which the kind of an omnipotence meted out by science and technology give rise in the human race, which has not yet succeeded in submitting to reason the behavior of man, especially collective man. Thus the human person is threatened today with all-pervading slavery, not through the fault of science, but through that of the enlarged power granted by science and technology (that is, by reason mastering natural phenomena) to human foolishness.

The moral problem thus faced by the scientist, his sense of responsibility toward the human community, his realization of the fact that mankind equipped with technology cannot survive without ethical wisdom, are making for him the rediscovery of true ends and supreme standards of human life a matter of emergency. Such a discovery cannot be brought about by science itself, as I just put it, but by ethical awareness and ethical philosophy, and religious faith. Especially moral philosophy has to make clear, against some logical positivists and so-called theorists of values, that moral values and standards can be the object of intrinsically true assertions, established not by scientific but by philosophic reason. So a trend is developing within the scientific world toward a wisdom and a spiritual unification of man that are beyond the scope of merely scientific work.

Where it is a question of moral recovery, not only reason but all the highest spiritual activities in man must be called to work. As Bergson put it, the world's body, now larger, calls for a surplus of soul, so that the mechanical and the mystical summon one another. In other terms, technology can really perform its task of human liberation only if the sense of inner freedom and contemplative love is made by the Gospel's inspiration to play a leading part in the new industrial civilization.

Since science's competence extends to observable and measurable phenomena, not to being itself in its own intellectually perceivable constitution, and to the means, not the ends of human life, it would be nonsense to expect that the progress of science will provide men with a new type of metaphysics, ethics or religion. . . . It is up to ontological knowledeg, not to science, to judge of the values, norms and ends which make human life simply good or bad.

The Screen

MY LAST DUCHESS

THERE is something about *"My Widow and I,"* an Italian film with English subtitles now being shown in this country, that is reminiscent of Browning's narrative poems. Perhaps because the movie has more head than heart, or because it uses Browning's story-telling method with a prologue and epilogue sandwiching a long, talky flashback. Or perhaps, most of all, because the things you remember afterward are the film's ironic humor and brilliant revelations of character.

"My Widow and I" is by no means a great film: its story is too thin and drawn-out and it is much too loquacious for the cinema medium; but it is an extremely entertaining movie and should appeal to high and middle brows who aren't shocked by its naughty tale. The prologue takes place in a cemetery where a man comes to visit his own grave and lingers to tell the caretaker about his sad plight. Several months ago this man (played by Vittorio De Sica, the famous director of "Shoe Shine" and "The Bicycle Thief") had an acute attack of indigestion from eating watermelon, and when he arrived home with a watermelon for his wife, he fell to the floor—supposedly dead. He woke up later to find himself in his coffin, the mourners gone, and his wife (lovely Isa Miranda) crying her eyes out. Well, after getting over the shock of seeing each other in this strange predicament, the husband and wife face another shock: what with the insurance policy, the husband is worth more dead than alive. So he decides to remain dead. After the husband watches his own funeral from a safe distance, the wife collects the insurance money; and they leave town for a spree.

The author of this fabulous tale never really meant us to believe it, but he does give us plenty of opportunity to laugh at his greedy couple, especially after they meet up with the man for whom the husband used to work. This man has for years been in love with the wife—respectfully, of course—and now there is no reason why he should not declare his love. This leads to a most involved and ludicrous situation—since this man is very rich and the husband, introduced as his own brother, is asked to help Mr. Moneybags with his suit. If the cast in this film weren't so deft in their performances and if Carlo L. Bragaglia hadn't handled the direction so well, this little comedy would fall flat on its face. It is at times rather poignant; and, for a film dealing with people who are so unscrupulous, it is amazingly unpretentious in its crime-does-not-pay solution. After seeing and laughing at "My Widow and I," no one will ever again pretend he's dead when he isn't.

★

THE story of Madeleine Smith, a woman who was tried in Scotland in 1857 for the murder of her lover, would no doubt (and maybe did, since hers was

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a famous trial) interest Robert Browning and could easily have been material for one of his poems. I'm sure he could have given this story more meaning and depth than does the English movie *"Madeleine"* which has plenty of plot but is shallow in characterization. The film starts like a documentary (its script is based on fact) and then soon slips into the seamy details of the clandestine affair between the daughter of a wealthy Glasgow family and her flashy but definitely impecunious lover. When her father, unaware of Madeleine's unladylike behavior, insists that she marry a man of his choosing, Madeleine is unsuccessful in breaking off her relations with her handsome cad who threatens her with letters she wrote during unguarded moments of passion. In desperation she continues to favor him with her company as well as with midnight snacks, including cups of cocoa—in one of which, so says the prosecution later, there was arsenic.

Director David Lean chose to do the first two-thirds of his film in a meticulously slow manner with repeated contrasts between the strict mores of the period and the unconventional conduct of the lovers; and surprisingly enough this part of the picture drags interminably. But the courtroom scenes are handled expertly; and the trial is fascinating throughout. However, since the final verdict is "Proven," which means that Madeleine is found neither guilty nor not guilty, and at the end we don't know who slipped her lover the arsenic, the film should have developed stronger lines in its characterizations. All of this has to add up to something, and since the performances (Ann Todd as Madeleine; Ivan Desny as her lover; Leslie Banks as papa; Norman Wooland as the respectable suitor) are rather on the cold fish side, you come to the end of this long, handsomely made movie wondering, so what?

★

THAT could also be your conclusion about *"The Paris Waltz,"* a French film with English subtitles, some beautiful sets and costumes of the Second Empire and lots of lively Offenbach music. But its frivolous plot is much more suitable to a ballet than to a movie, even a period piece like this which is no doubt typical and is meant to be as gay and racing as Offenbach's tunes. This plot, without meaning to be taken seriously, purports to tell about the love affair between the famous composer and the woman who sang his songs so well. Pierre Fresnay, as the near-sighted Offenbach who is mainly in love with his own music, and Yvonne Printemps, as the pretty flirtatious singer who seems to thrive on breaking hearts, are excellent in the leading roles; and they are surrounded by a large cast who spend most of their time before the camera trying to look very attractive, very gay and very wicked. If you like Offenbach's music and canned can-can, "The Paris Waltz" is for you.

★

IF THE Italian film *"Difficult Years"* could have decided whether it was to be taken as comedy serious commentary or tragedy, it might have been a very effective movie. It shows what happens to a Sicilian family

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who fall under the spell of fascism. The father (expertly played by Umberto Spadaro) is a poor government clerk who is forced by his bosses to join the fascist party in 1932. Long before the end of World War II, he has many a reason for regretting not only that he joined but also that he did not actively oppose the party and everything it stood for. There is a quality to Spadaro's acting that is reminiscent of Chaplin: touches of poignancy when the underdog is bullied by Mussolini's boys and even by his own wife; touches of heroism when he tells off the drug-store intellectuals who argued against fascism but did nothing; touches of everyman when he finds himself pushed in the corner and realizes his own ineffectuality cost him dearly. Director Luigi Zampa comes through with some quite tender and moving scenes, some sharp satire and some sincere tragedy; but the total effect is diffuse. "The Great Dictator" showed that a comedy could be very useful in unmasking the evil behind fascism. I wish "Difficult Years" which has so much to say had said it better.

PHILIP T. HARTUNG.

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How Green This Valley

By JAMES O'GARA

IN HIS DAY that well known barefoot boy-millionaire, Henry Wallace, killed more than just pigs. Like many another special pleader, Wallace sucked the real meaning out of some valuable phrases and ideas. One of those he weakened was the concept of economic democracy.

Wallace insisted, in season and out, that Russia had economic democracy while the United States enjoyed political democracy. The plain fact, of course, was that Russia was and is a long way from any kind of democracy, economic or otherwise, and to claim the contrary is to play footsie with slave labor camps. The general realization of this truth has made Wallace's loose use of the term "economic democracy" about as valuable and welcome as his personal election-day endorsement would be to, say, Gene Talmadge.

Wallace has, in other words, succeeded in giving the whole idea of economic democracy a black eye in some quarters, and that fact is unfortunate. The idea expressed in the phrase is rich with meaning, and not less so because no one is sure exactly what is contained in it. This uncertainty as to exact content is not due to any flaw native to the concept, but simply to the fact that economic democracy on a really large scale has yet to be worked out in practice. We have the principles, and we are making approaches on certain levels; we have approximations here and there, but we do not yet know what this baby will look like when grown to full stature.

A case in point is provided by the subject matter of a new book, *Steeltown* by Charles R. Walker (Harper, $4.50). *Steeltown* is described as an industrial case history of the conflict between progress and security. Although the issue is not explicitly raised, the book also seems to be a case history in the lack of economic democracy and social planning.

★

MOST AMERICANS over thirty have some idea of what happens to a town when depression boards the windows of two out of three of its factories. Our political history since 1932 is, to a large extent, testimony that the majority do not like what they remember. The occasion for the writing of *Steeltown* was analogous to that commonplace of the depression. What happens to a small town in a period of full employment when a large industry, employing fully two-thirds of the community's industrial workers, decides to shut down its plant and move elsewhere? How does the announcement of the proposed move hit the workers, the shopkeepers, the town officials, the other

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businessmen in the community? What joint efforts are made to meet the community crisis, and how successful are such efforts?

Steeltown endeavors to answer such questions, apply the case history method to industrial relations.

Even though it is intended for those with a special interest in the field, *Steeltown* still raises problems as real as a howling dog next door. The steel town described is Elwood City, Pennsylvania. The plant in question is that of the National Tube Company, a subsidiary of the United States Steel Corporation. The planned shut-down was the result of a major, top-level decision, arrived at when the policy setters of U. S. Steel decided that Ellwood City faced an increasingly difficult competitive position. This decision to shift production elsewhere was made by corporation executives whose tasks were clearly outlined for them: to guide the destinies of the various subsidiaries of U. S. Steel so that the corporate giant would continue to show a good healthy profit over the years.

Admittedly, such decisions raise many vexing problems. One major problem seems as yet to be largely untouched. The executives of a corporation like U. S. Steel can decide, presumably, what the most profitable move is for the corporation. On such questions, the decision reached is unilateral, made by them alone with the solitary yardstick of profit to guide them. Sometimes such decisions, however, are heavily weighted with grave social consequences which come close to being quasi-public in their nature. Are these social consequences simply to happen, blindly and inexorably, as the by-products of economic decisions?

Ellwood City is, to illustrate the point, an example of that increasingly rare phenomenon in America, the well integrated small community. In a certain sense, Ellwood City lives on the capital of the past. The real economic center of power for the principal industry, seamless steel tubing, has long since left the town, and the hard core of final authority shifted to the distant offices of the parent corporation. Yet until the planned shut-down was announced, the workers in Ellwood City had never quite grasped the essential anonymity and impersonality of the modern industrial corporate structure.

★

THE INNOCENCE of Ellwood City may be traced to a number of causes. In their origins the majority of the plant's workers are either rural or local small-town. Relations between employees and local management are good, and top management is a long way off. There is in the plant, as in the community, a great stress on family; work in the tube mill provides a common thread through several generations.

Ellwood City is a home-owning and home-loving community, sometimes referred to by the local boosters as "the city of churches." It is neither a union town nor a management town. But to a very large extent the tube mill is the life of the town. Even on a purely economic level it could hardly be otherwise, since U. S. Steel pays two-thirds of the town's industrial payroll.

Under such circumstances it is easy for the outsider to appreciate the mixture of shock and skepticism which greeted the company's announcement of the shut-down plans. The shock was natural enough; closing the plant would be like draining off two-thirds of the town's industrial life-blood. The skepticism was also a very human reaction, similar to that felt by Sinclair Lewis' characters: "It can't happen here." To many citizens of Ellwood City it was downright incredible that their own lives, the lives of thousands of other families and, indeed, of the entire town, could be so transformed by, as one of them put it, "just an announcement."

Incredible or not, that's the way it was. It is perhaps significant of the state of our industrial relations that most Ellwood City workers received their first word of the impending uprooting through no more personalized channel than the town newspaper. It is even more significant that a whole town's pattern of living could be so completely disrupted by one important, "purely economic" decision.

Later at a meeting of the stockholders, a representative of the union made a plea for keeping the mill in Ellwood City. The four thousand steelworkers and the total population of fifteen thousand in Ellwood City, he said, were waiting ("like condemned") for the city to die. "Tragedy stalks the streets," the union man put it, "and (the) suspense is like waiting under the threat of an atomic bomb."

★

THE UNION man's prose may have been somewhat purple, but it is hard to deny to his speech a solid basis in fact. The workers at Ellwood City have been making tubes—and profits—for the Corporation for over fifty years. It is true that because of present full employment the Company was able to offer jobs elsewhere to workers willing and able to pull up their family roots. This offer does not seem to change the essential fact that there is too much involved in such decisions for them to be considered only in terms of dollars and cents. If ever there was a case where the joint planning of an industry council seems to have been called for, this was it. We may not know what shape economic democracy will take in each particular situation, but it seems quite clear that the process followed at Ellwood City was a long way removed from the ideal.

At this writing, the increased demand for steel tubing has been enough to posepone the transfer of operations. Even before Korea Ellwood City had been granted a reprieve by consumer demand. Now, since war tends to make profitable what previously was merely socially desirable, Korea will probably push that decision even further away. Despite this last-minute, horse-opera rescue, we cannot continue indefinitely to evade facing questions like those posed by Ellwood City. There have already been too many postponements, too many evasions in the past.

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Books

The Secret Game. François Boyer. Translated from the French by Michael Legat. Harcourt. $2.50.

I WAS stretched on the beach. My eyes were closed. I could hear the shrieks of the children around. Suddenly, the sound of a command struck my ears: *one two, one two.* I turned, raising myself on my elbow. A few feet away, a group of twelve to fourteen year olds were martially marching around and laughing at the same time. They marched in a circle. There was something in the center which I could not see. Then the march stopped. They stood still, gathered to one side. I saw what was in the center: a small mound, in the shape of a grave. My heart made a leap.

It was a soldier's grave. I recognized it not only because of the military "ceremony" but because the children had carefully shaped a lump of sand in the form of a helmet at the head of it. They had stuck in the "body" a lot of broken pieces of wood. I could not figure out if these were daggers or flowers. A red-headed, healthy looking youngster folded his hands and said: "Our Father blabla, blabla, blablablabla, blabla-blabla . . . " He smiled broadly, and the others around him were splitting their sides laughing.

It is perfectly normal for children to play "funeral." In Europe it is, alas, a favorite game. But this was the first time I had seen children making fun of it. And it turned my stomach. Had I been in France I would have marched down to them at once and told them in no uncertain terms what I thought of it. I could have done that, because the French children and I would have understood each other. Not the words. What was back of them. But I looked at those beautiful specimens of young human beings on the Long Island beach having a rollicking time at playing funeral, and I could not find the words. All my words were too serious. I could not find the off-hand, carefree remark which might have made some impression on them. And while I kept thinking about what to say, they were through with the "praying" and started to dance wildly around the "grave," shrieking savagely, and finally leaping over it. (The marvellous, smooth, rubber-like, effortless leap of the Americans which made the French people say of the GI's: "But they are liek leopards!") And it was all over. And they were gone.

FRANCOIS BOYER has written a book about two children who play funeral also. They are French children. And they are in complete earnest. So much so that they bury not only animals who happen to die, but they manage "accidents" in order to have funerals; and finally one of them ends by being himself the necessary and all important "accessory" to the macabre game. These two children love death. It is a deep passion, an overwhelming attraction. It is all the more terrifying that it rings true.

A nine-year-old little girl trudging her way alone in the midst of the flood of people fleeing the Germans in 1940. Hunger, thirst, hysteria, and the planes swooping down and firing horribly into the compact mass of human beings. Mother killed. Father dragging his wounded leg for miles, and at long last lying in the ditch, done for. Paulette trying in vain to wake up the stiff and cold body: "Daddy! Daddy!" Mad women carrying her off, taking her for their own killed or lost child, kissing her, mauling her, then throwing her aside all of a sudden. And then, the plane again. And the dog howling across the field, and Paulette running after him.

An eleven-year-old farm boy finds Paulette and he brings her home. She is the one who will teach him the fascination of death.

The peasant family receives a harsh treatment from the writer. They are "typed" and streamlined in order to give just the proper background to the two children. Their total absence of humanity is monstruous. But I don't think that the point is to discuss whether such people exist or not. The way they act makes possible the "secret game," and that is what is important. At least that is the way it seems to me. At any rate it is the children's psychology that makes this a work of art.

THE skill of the writer brings home forcefully the immense children's tragedy of our age, not only physical and material, but of their innermost being. "But what about the children? What shall I do with them?", Ivan asks, with deep anguish, in *The Brothers Karamazov.* And he concludes: "Nothing is worth a child's tear." Albert Camus in *The Plaque* picks up the same challenge. But how many of us adults, throughout the world, are conscious of this? How many of us realize that we will never make it up to the children?

More especially, we Americans cannot make it up. For the Italian, the British, the French, the Russian, the German, the Dutch, the Japanese children know what it is like. And the Jewish children we could have saved by opening our doors wide. And now the Korean children. Almost all the world over, children know. But not here. Not in America. Our children did not know what it was like during World War I. They did not know what it was like during World War II. We have not had any Paulettes. Not yet. That is why playing funeral can be hilarious. And American children are not responsible. But we are. And what is being buried in make-believe on the beach is our own soul.

That is why, apart from its art, quite classic in its proportion, this book should be read by all. With an economy of means not a little remindful of the best French movies, for which François Boyer writes, the story of *The Secret Game* moves on inexorably, its quiet horror staring the reader in the face, until he comes to know the tearful truth, that there is no escape from judgment for having caused "a child's tear."

CLAIRE HUCHET BISHOP.

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The Margin. J. D. Scott. Knopf. $2.75.

LIKE many of the good little English motion pictures *The Margin* is adult and unassuming; it does not regard a satisfactory love story as incompatible with either humor or intelligence. As a result, its occasional faults, which might be embarrassing in a slicker product, are hardly more bothersome than misspelled words in a love letter.

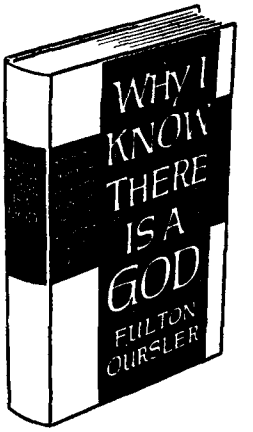
But for a man who has been a civil servant all his life, as author Scott has, this novel has faintly heretical overtones. The heroine, Margaret Warriner, an employee in a British ministry, has to choose between two suitors—Philip, the most up-and-coming civil servant of them all, and Colin, a film director. Margaret chooses Colin.

This turns out to be the requisite happy ending. But although Margaret embraces her choice without a sidewise qualm, the author has evidently had quite a tussle with his own predilections. He has stacked the cards against Colin—made him violent, subject to fits of depression, promiscuous, a heavy drinker, and wolfish-looking to boot. It requires considerable acumen, and some clairvoyance, on Margaret's part to see through the smoke screen and discover that he is actually a creative artist with a passion for justice.

What Mr. Scott seemingly intended as an ironical commentary on the ways of the British civil service is considerably softened by his sympathy for his colleagues. The overriding impersonality, the petty jealousies, the substitution of security for emotion or adventure are all there. But compared to the synthetic color and the irresponsibility of the denizens of the film world in which Colin moves, these are pale vices indeed. Even Margaret's superior in the ministry, who is the very model of the modern civil servant, is not as repellent as Mr. Scott wants him to appear. Perhaps it is a comment on the current climate of opinion that his addiction to security and his lack of emotion do not brand him as a social leper. But on the other side of the picture, the author hardly offers a more agreeable alternative among his collection of anti-Semitic business executives, exhibitionist dilettantes, and aggressively self-centered aristocrats.

There is something of the mystery story technique in this kind of character delineation. The author parcels out faults so widely among his characters that any one of them might be the villain—or the hero. However, the process is handled with intelligence and restraint, and the result is merely a group of normally imperfect individuals. No caricature blurs the basic conflict between cautious safety and the selfishness of even a tightly bridled plutocracy. Fortunately the author concludes that there is a livable margin between the two extremes; in a world of minimum wages and health insurance there is still room to live dangerously. When the curtain rings down, Mr. Scott, along with Margaret and Colin, is on the side of art, adventure, and the angels.

CAROL H. WEISS.



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The Case of Comrade Tulayev. Victor Serge. Doubleday. $3.

VICTOR SERGE, one of the earliest "disillusioned Communists," is also one of the most dramatic and even tragic figures among the men who in early days believed in the Bolshevik revolution, and then paid heavily for redeemed human dignity and freedom. Victor Serge, the son of Russian intellectuals exiled under the Czars because of their radicalism, directed during the first years of the Bolshevik regime a Communist newspaper in Germany. As the jacket of his novel tells us, he "divided his time between Petersburg, Moscow and Berlin" until "his close association with Trotsky brought about his deportation to Siberia." This was in 1933; later he was released and came to France, thanks to the protests and with the help of his numerous influential friends belonging to West-European intellectual circles.

Serge's realistic, truthful and profoundly moving account of his Siberian experience was published in the thirties by Emmanuel Mounier in *Esprit*, and stirred the young French radical intelligentsia to a clearer understanding of the ruthless and perverse methods of Stalin's purges. After he was saved from Soviet concentration camps, Victor Serge once again suffered persecution; this time his life was endangered by the Nazi occupants of Europe. He finally escaped to Mexico, where he died in 1947. His long suffering as well as his noble and courageous character, drew respect in many quarters, even among those who did not share his Trotskyist creed.

I have stressed extensively the author's background and personalinity, because I feel that both are strongly reflected in *The Case of Comrade Tulayev;* indeed the book cannot be properly understood without a brief sketch of the man who wrote it.

TULAYEV'S case is like a stone thrown into an infested pool: the unpremeditated murder of a high Soviet official is believed by Stalin's secret police to have been the final act of an elaborate and subtly spun conspiracy against "the Chief" himself. So the formidable machinery of Soviet "justice" is set into motion. Victor Serge tells his story masterfully and poignantly. How frail and human, "all too human," are these prosecutors, henchmen, executioners! Their very cruelty betrays a fundamental weakness. For these perpetrators of the "Chief's" vengeance are themselves threatened by a new wave of purges. No high Soviet official is sure today of what his fate will be tomorrow. The author brings this point out by showing us one of the "fallen idols" arrested at a small railway-station and ironically requesting that his portrait be removed from the office of the railroad security inspector who performs the arrest.

What I have said of Victor Serge can be applied to his last novel; it is dramatic, and it is truthful (though at times bordering on the incredible in depicting the extreme human degradation resulting from the highest principles of integral communism). It is, as I have said, the reflection of a noble and long-suffering soul. We must deplore, however, the fact that Victor Serge still seemed to think that his own initial generation of militant Communists risen to power were bearers of an integral truth, destroyed by Stalin's opportunism: "What men!" he writes. "History takes milleniums to produce men so great! Incorruptible, intelligent, formed by thirty or forty years, and pure, pure!" To this we shall object that poison, however "pure," is still poison.

HELENE ISWOLSKY.

Secret. Michael Amrine. Houghton Mifflin. $3.

BENJAMIN F. HALVERSON is a physics professor engaged by the government in the development of the atomic bomb. Suddenly aware of his personal responsibility in the use of the weapon he has worked on, Halverson joins The Federation of American Scientists in an attempt to awaken a sense of responsibility in the general public, and to influence congressional legislation designed to control atomic energy. A Senate loyalty investigation is the final outcome of this endeavor, and as Halverson is drawn by the War Department deeper into the development of other weapons of mass destruction, he drifts into disillusionment, pessimism, and a sense of the futility of resistance.

Mr. Amrine's theme has profound implications. And Mr. Amrine realizes this fact. As one of his characters says, "What the bomb has done to people is tragic." Yet his people are pathetic, rather than tragic. They seem more the victims of fate and higher forces than of their own wills.

But even within this limitation the author fails to realize the potentialities of his subject matter. And his failure is due, apparently, not to a deficiency of insight. That he sees at least something of the values involved is evident throughout the novel. He sees that war today is not merely total, but in a sense permanent, and that all knowledge therefore stands in danger of becoming military—and hence restricted—knowledge. He sees that men are called upon to surrender their freedom and suspend private judgment in favor of war-making efficiency. And he sees further—and this is the specific point involved in his novel—that the specialization and objectivity of modern science have led scientists to refuse or neglect to consider the consequences of their discoveries —and that very painfully and belatedly have they been brought to the realization that such a refusal involves a betrayal of humanity in general, and of their own freedom and personality in particular. Thus, I say, it is not Mr. Amrine's insight that is deficient.

The fault lies, rather, in his ability as a writer of fiction. Mr. Amrine, the book's dust jacket notes, "was able to bring to such a vital cause as lobbying for the Atomic Energy Act his long journalistic experience. . . ." His prose gives evidence of that experience. It is journalistic, in the bad sense of that term.

Finally, it may be said that *experience* does not come

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through. Mr. Amrine states that a person experiences a certain reaction or feeling, but he does not convince us, he does not show us. There is no emotion in the novel: everything is on the descriptive and narrative level. In short, fiction does not seem to be Mr. Amrine's medium.

FRANCIS X. DUGGAN.

The Administration of American Foreign Affairs. James L. McCamy. Knopf. $5.

THERE is no doubt, as the author of this book points out, that foreign affairs will continue for an indefinite future to be the main concern of the nation. Yet, he adds, that fact is not recognized in the organization of American government, which does not produce a far sighted, broadly informed foreign policy. Beginning with the Department of State, Professor McCamy examines the responsibility of the President, the Foreign Service, Intelligence, Congress and the public in the formation and conduct of foreign relations.

Though critical he is not prejudiced. He finds that persons in government are neither better nor worse than in other walks of life. Though he rejects the implications of such epithets as "the cookie pushers" or "the striped pants boys," he finds much to support the contention that the Foreign Service has been a jealous group seeking to maintain its perquisites against the intrusion of other departmental personnel.

The war and now the continuing struggle against a world wide conspiracy require that the specialized representatives of industry, engineering, science, intelligence or propaganda be enlisted in the strategy of total diplomacy. But their work must be integrated and not subjected to the interests of the Foreign Service. Though the Foreign Service officers have done admirable work, their broad training is often inadequate to the technical tasks which may yet be crucial at a particular time and place. There are, of course, two sides to any question. And certainly the requirements of coordination and overall responsibility ordinarily must be met by the Foreign Service.

On this issue Professor McCamy summarizes the findings of the Task Force of the Hoover Commission. To eliminate a "cancerous cleavage" they proposed an amalgamation of personnel in the Department at home and the Foreign Service into a single Service, obligated to serve both at home and abroad. They further recommended the ending of the separate administration of the Foreign Service. Thus, the Task Force rejected the principle of a separate, dominant elite of political officers, a proposition alarming to the incumbents and by no means yet accepted in the Department.

This is but one of the significant issues discussed in this book. Suffice it to say that this is highly competent work, informative in detail and balanced in judgment.

EDWARD LITTLEJOHN.

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THE author is modest indeed in describing his little books. "In the process of destroying old diaries, spiritual notebooks, retreat matter and (let it be admitted) rejected MSS., he says, "there remains always a determined bundle which is able to resist these periodic clearances. It is from such material that this book is drawn." What Dom van Zeller has saved for us richly deserves publication. Each few pages—the books are in the form of detached paragraphs—present a thought complete in itself. The reader soon becomes aware, however, of a thread holding the whole together.

Primarily, these notes were written for those advanced in the spiritual life, specifically for men and women called to contemplation, yet others, too, will take them up with profit. For passages like the following commend themselves to the generality of Christians: "Once God is seen in His creation the landscape springs to life. Once creation is seen in God it doesn't much matter whether the landscape depicts the purple shadows of suffering or the bright sunshine of joy: it depicts the will of God, and this is all that matters." "It is perhaps too obvious to need mention . . . that if our wills were always ready to accept the will of God we would never feel impatient or envious or disgruntled or restless, and if our hearts were really established in the love of God we would never feel that our affections were pulling us away."

HENRY G. J. BECK.

• REVIEWERS •

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